

Politics & Society

<http://pas.sagepub.com/>

Revisiting Media Effects in Authoritarian Societies: Democratic Conceptions, Collectivistic Norms, and Media Access in Urban China

Jie Lu, John Aldrich and Tianjian Shi

Politics & Society 2014 42: 253 originally published online 4 March 2014

DOI: 10.1177/0032329213519423

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://pas.sagepub.com/content/42/2/253>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

Additional services and information for *Politics & Society* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://pas.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://pas.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

>> [Version of Record](#) - Apr 29, 2014

[OnlineFirst Version of Record](#) - Mar 4, 2014

[What is This?](#)

Revisiting Media Effects in Authoritarian Societies: Democratic Conceptions, Collectivistic Norms, and Media Access in Urban China

Politics & Society
2014, Vol. 42(2) 253–283
© 2014 SAGE Publications
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0032329213519423
pas.sagepub.com



Jie Lu

Department of Government, American University, Washington, DC, USA

John Aldrich

Department of Political Science, Duke University, Durham, NC, USA

Tianjian Shi

Department of Political Science, Duke University, Durham, NC, USA

Abstract

We argue that, to effectively understand media effects in authoritarian societies, researchers must assess different types of media strategies adopted by authoritarian leaders. Using survey data from two Chinese cities, we examine the effects of two types of media strategies adopted by the Chinese government, targeting political attitudes and nonpolitical values and norms, respectively. Following a new line of research, we contrast China's domestic-controlled media to foreign free media. After accounting for the selection bias in Chinese urbanites' media access, we do not find sufficient evidence for the effect of the media strategies directly targeting their democratic conceptions. However, sufficient and robust evidence shows that more intensive consumption of diverse media sources, including foreign media, does significantly but indirectly counteract the Chinese government's political campaigns targeting its citizens' democratic conceptions, via thwarting the government's media strategies to cultivate a collectivistic norm in the society.

Keywords

media effects, media control, authoritarian societies, urban China

Corresponding Author:

Jie Lu, Assistant Professor, Department of Government, American University, 4400 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20016, USA.

Email: jl@american.edu

Public opinion is partially shaped by the surrounding information environment. Even in liberal democracies, elites may affect public opinion through the messages they offer.¹ Comparatively speaking, the absence of free media gives authoritarian leaders additional leeway to exert a greater influence over public opinion; and they certainly act as if they agree with this claim. One aspect of elites' media control is ensuring that they send clear, strong, and focused messages through domestic media. On the other hand, elites also attempt to reduce the presence of competing messages possibly delivered through independent or foreign media. Practically speaking, authoritarian leaders have made serious efforts to create in exaggerated fashion the one-sided information environment Zaller has assessed. Recently, for instance, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) publicly identified loss of media control as a critical factor that resulted in the collapse of the former USSR, and warned against a similar danger in China.² Thus, it is understandable that students of comparative politics have repeatedly emphasized the significance of media reform for democratic transitions.³ Nevertheless, there are two major problems—one methodological and one theoretical—in existing research that have prevented us from effectively and comprehensively examining media effects in authoritarian societies.

Methodologically, as Mondak pointedly argues, studies on media effects in US politics have been plagued by difficulty in measuring the key variable: "if media coverage is always present, and if exposure to that coverage is widespread, then we are left with an explanatory variable that does not vary."⁴ This methodological challenge is more serious for corresponding research on authoritarian societies. Due to media control, the content of media coverage (in addition to its presence and access) in non-democracies varies little, which further constrains the variation in the explanatory variable. To secure sufficient analytical leverage, relevant research conventionally focuses on variation in people's habits of media consumption (e.g., exposure frequency),⁵ or on varying effectiveness of authoritarian governments' ability to control different media outlets (e.g., TV vs. newspapers vs. the Internet).⁶ Taking advantage of natural experiments or carefully matched observations, newly emerging research skillfully increases variation in the explanatory variable by contrasting controlled media to free media (which can be foreign or domestic independent media) in authoritarian societies to examine media effects.⁷ This new approach offers some critical methodological advantages that enable more efficient and effective examination of media effects in authoritarian societies. Of course, these demanding research designs and case selections constrain these new approaches to specific regions or certain historical periods of an authoritarian society, thus limiting the generalizability of their findings. In this paper, we extend this new line of research (i.e., contrasting controlled and free media) to expand its application to today's largest authoritarian society, and provide some original empirical evidence on media effects in urban China.

Authoritarian leaders have adopted a variety of media strategies to effectively limit the diversity of citizens' opinions and perhaps most especially to avoid the generation of opposition to incumbents, their parties, and the political systems they constitute. One type of strategy directly targets people's critical political attitudes (e.g., political support, regime legitimacy, etc.) through information manipulation, framing,

censoring, and discourse/ideology cultivation. Contemporary literature has closely examined the effects of this type of media strategy on public opinion in authoritarian societies. Such research has also dominated existing debates on media effects in authoritarian societies.⁸ In practice, shrewd authoritarian leaders adopt a second type of media strategy, one that targets people's nonpolitical values and norms (e.g., orientations toward authority, collectivism, etc.) through propaganda and indoctrination. These values/norms may seem politically irrelevant at first sight, but have serious implications for political dynamics in these societies.⁹ As Tang and Iyengar suggest in their recent review of a collection of essays on China's media system, "It is possible that the influence of propaganda on public opinion is indirect and mediated by core values."¹⁰ This echoes Bartels' earlier argument for the significance of indirect media effects and call for more emphasis on their study.¹¹ Unfortunately, little existing research has been able to heed Bartels' call. In this paper, we try to fill in the gap by revisiting the effects of both types of media strategies on public opinion in authoritarian societies, with particular emphasis on how to effectively examine the effects of the second type of media strategy, one that targets nonpolitical values/norms, as well as their implications for shaping critical political attitudes indirectly.

Though still a minority in today's China, a significant number of Chinese, particularly in urban areas, do access foreign media through various means. Using a random-sample based survey conducted in two Chinese cities in 2005, we explore the effects of the CCP's different media strategies by comparing the Chinese urbanites embedded in distinct, one- versus two-sided media environments after accounting for their self-selection in media access. We are particularly interested in Chinese urbanites' democratic conceptions and collectivistic orientations. Of course, understanding how media control shapes public beliefs about the nature of government is at the very heart of studies on public opinion in authoritarian societies. The CCP regime calls itself a "democracy" and has developed a set of ideas to buttress what it means by democracy; albeit these ideas are (as we discuss below) essentially different from liberal democracy. Thus, the Chinese people's conceptions of democracy are very likely to be shaped as the CCP seeks to exert media control by directly targeting political attitudes. Media strategies that target nonpolitical values/norms should be especially relevant for collectivism, given the lingering influence of Confucianism and Leninism in China. This nonpolitical value should also be a particularly desirable choice for the CCP, given the leeway that collectivism may generate for its abuse of power in the name of public interest. Methodologically, Chinese urbanites' democratic conceptions and collectivistic orientations provide most-likely cases for examining how the CCP shapes public opinion with different types of media strategies.¹²

The contribution of this paper to the literature on media effects in authoritarian societies is twofold. First, this paper moves beyond the conventional focus on the effects of the media strategies directly targeting critical political attitudes, and brings attention to another set of equally important media strategies, those that target social values and norms. Second, this paper provides original empirical data from urban China to help assess the findings of the newly emerging line of research that contrasts controlled to free media in order to examine media effects in authoritarian societies.

Following this new line of research, this paper differs from the predominant approach in the literature on China's media system (which focuses on its domestic media only), and it generates new evidence on the effects of the CCP's different strategies of media control.

This paper is organized as follows: We first examine different strategies of media control, as well as their exemplification in China, and theorize about their implications for existing research on media effects in authoritarian societies. Then we introduce our research design, survey data, and the key variables for empirical analysis. After justifying our empirical strategies and selection of modeling techniques, we present and discuss the empirical results. The last section concludes and provides some suggestions for future research.

Different Strategies of Media Control and Their Exemplification in China

As previously discussed, recent methodological advances such as the use of natural experiments, instrumental variables, and field experiments have significantly improved our understanding of media effects in authoritarian societies. Nevertheless, regardless of which methods are used, most existing studies still focus on the effects of media control in authoritarian societies on critical political attitudes like regime support and assessments of democracy. Few assess how the use of foreign free media can challenge other media strategies authoritarian leaders use, those that target people's non-political values and norms. Both theoretically and practically, in authoritarian societies, campaigns and indoctrination through mass media by targeting people's nonpolitical values/norms may be expected to have serious implications for political mobilization, opinion shaping, and other political outcomes. Thus, we believe failure in existing research to assess this second type of media strategy sufficiently has prevented us from drawing a more comprehensive evaluation of the roles that free media may serve in challenging authoritarian politics and perhaps even in facilitating democratic transitions.

Consider the media strategies of (1) highlighting or even fabricating the government's achievements, (2) framing the coverage of negative events in a way that shows the government's intention and capacity in securing good governance, (3) completely censoring, if necessary, some coverage that may damage the government's image, and (4) promoting political discourses and ideologies that help justify nondemocratic rule. These are straightforward, conventional media strategies adopted by authoritarian leaders to cultivate favorable political attitudes among their people. For instance, according to its official media, the CCP has been achieving one victory after another, despite rare and minor "disturbances," such as the Cultural Revolution; although such "occasional disturbances" have cost millions of people their lives.¹³ The stunning, officially reported growth in Chinese GDP is also under suspicion of being inflated to sustain the CCP's legitimacy.¹⁴ Despite their extensive coverage of corruption and problems of governance, the Chinese media rarely blame and challenge the CCP, but hold individual officials, local governments, or some central ministries responsible.

And they generally frame such coverage to present the CCP's determination and effectiveness in uprooting corruption, streamlining administration, and promoting good governance.¹⁵ In addition, China's, like other nations', authoritarian leaders seek to cultivate political discourses that favor their *de facto* nondemocratic rule and preempt building of pressure for a genuine democratic transition. Particularly, they use media campaigns, *inter alia*, to actively promote an alternate discourse on democracy, other than the one recognizable in the West; and forcefully urge the differentiation between "democracy with Chinese characteristics" and "Western democracy."¹⁶

The aforementioned media strategies that directly target critical political attitudes through information manipulation, framing, censoring, and discourse cultivation are only one set of strategies that authoritarian leaders use for media control. There is another type of equally important and effective media strategies available. Despite their distinct targets, authoritarian regimes may aim at shaping nonpolitical values and norms. Accumulated findings in studies of political psychology and public opinion have emphasized the significance of nonpolitical values/norms as effective predictors of political attitudes and behavior.¹⁷ Such values/norms—with serious implications for the political dynamics in authoritarian societies—are at least potentially influenced by media control and one-sided propaganda. Many authoritarian leaders appear to be fully aware of the advantages that they may secure with this type of media strategy. For instance, the CCP uses media campaigns creating "role models" to exalt individuals who have pursued collective interests at the cost of individual benefits or even their personal lives. It also capitalizes upon China's Confucian tradition to promote values eulogizing obedience to authority.¹⁸ This emphasis on value/norm cultivation in media campaigns was elevated to an unprecedented height in late 2011, when the CCP issued an official guideline to promote the core values of its socialist culture.¹⁹

Thanks to its "mirror-holding" and "window-opening" effects,²⁰ accessing foreign free media may correct the incomplete or biased information people collect from controlled media in authoritarian societies and thus reshape their political attitudes.²¹ In the case of China, many sensitive events like the spread of AIDS among blood donors in Henan and the SARS outbreak in Guangzhou were first covered in foreign media, including Taiwanese and Hong Kong media.²² Only then were such stories transmitted back and widely circulated in China, later leading to changes in its official policies and responses. Meanwhile, liberal discourse and ideas on democracy and political rights carried by foreign media may also help the Chinese people see the authoritarian nature of the CCP regime despite its propaganda campaigns, and contribute to the growing demand for civic liberty and political rights.²³ That is why the CCP regime has made significant investments to block "sensitive" information from foreign media. These effects of accessing foreign media by thwarting the media strategies directly targeting political attitudes are the focus of most existing research on media effects in authoritarian societies, including China.

Nevertheless, using media sources beyond authoritarian regimes' control may have even broader and more nuanced influence over these societies' political dynamics, via, for instance, challenging their media strategies targeting people's nonpolitical values/norms. As Norris and Inglehart demonstrate, cosmopolitan communications are

strongly correlated with more liberal moral values.²⁴ Exposure to such pluralistic values and norms makes it much more difficult for authoritarian leaders to indoctrinate their citizens with a different set of values and norms that may benefit their nondemocratic rule that, for instance, demands the people's blind obedience, or calls for "necessary sacrifices" for achieving collective interests that also have the effect of increasing their private/privileged-groups' gains at the expense of average citizens. By facilitating people's exposure to pluralistic values/norms, accessing foreign media can counteract authoritarian leaders' inconspicuous media strategies in molding their citizens' nonpolitical values/norms that have critical implications for the latter's political attitudes. Unfortunately, existing research has rarely addressed these more nuanced and indirect media effects.

A Survey from Urban China and Key Variables

Like many other authoritarian regimes, the Chinese government seeks to control its mass media.²⁵ Some scholars argue that the decentralization and commercialization of China's media industry and the penetration of new information technologies (e.g., satellite TVs and the Internet) have gradually transformed the very nature of China's mass media.²⁶ However, for many other observers, the increasing commercialization of Chinese media since the early 1990s has yet to change its nature.²⁷ In their view, the semicommercialized media is still effectively regulated by the CCP; and the regime has successfully staged public opinion to the benefit of its domestic and foreign policies.²⁸ A salient feature of existing research on media effects in China is that most scholars focus exclusively on how Chinese citizens' exposure and attentiveness to domestic media affect their attitudes and behavior. Such research has undeniable value in providing rich information on the interaction between the CCP and its mass media, as well as implications for Chinese politics. Nevertheless, the lack of (significant) variance in the media environment also prevents a deeper understanding on how effectively the CCP uses different media strategies for political purposes.²⁹ In this paper, we move beyond this conventional approach and incorporate foreign media sources into our examination.

Selection of Survey Sites

Given the aforementioned unresolved debates on the nature of China's media environment and the lack of systematic data for evaluating such debates before our fieldwork, we assessed the broadest array of alternative media we could. Even though the Chinese government has employed substantial political resources to control citizens' access to alternative media sources, there has always been some degree of "leakage." People living in some coastal cities, such as Xiamen in Fujian Province, have long been able to pick up radio and TV signals from Taiwan with simple antennas, thus accessing media sources beyond the CCP's control that were inaccessible in other parts of China.³⁰ In many cases, the information through such channels is essentially different from the official accounts in China's domestic media, particularly so for political ideas

and discourse and for social values and norms following Taiwan's democratic transition in the late 1980s.³¹ We, therefore, expect residents of Xiamen to have a greater chance of encountering political ideas, social values, and norms that differ from the official ones disseminated through China's controlled media, and of having encountered them over a longer period of time. Although increasing access to new information technologies might have weakened Xiamen residents' geographic advantage, including Xiamen in the survey maximizes our chance of capturing those accessing media sources beyond the CCP's control.³² To facilitate comparison and increase contrast, we selected another large, booming city in interior China, Chengdu in Sichuan Province, as the second site for an identical survey. The two surveys were conducted by the Research Center for Contemporary China at Peking University in 2005, using GIS-based probability sampling. The sample was designed to be representative of the whole adult population (18+) at the time of the survey in Xiamen and Chengdu.³³

An Alternate Democratic Conception

In this paper, one key variable for examining the effects of the media strategies directly targeting critical political attitudes is the guardianship discourse on democracy, promoted by the CCP through, *inter alia*, its media campaigns. This specific discourse promotes paternalistic meritocracy in the name of democracy.³⁴ Like many other authoritarian leaders, political leaders in China acknowledge the legitimacy and value of democracy.³⁵ Meanwhile, the CCP has also been putting in enormous efforts to cultivate and promote alternate discourses on democracy (e.g., democratic centralism, socialist democracy, and democracy with Chinese characteristics) to shape the Chinese people's democratic conceptions.³⁶ Although, from the perspective of those outside China's media environment, such efforts merely disguise the CCP's authoritarian nature with a democratic veneer, the media campaigns within its protected sphere of influence may successfully win over the Chinese people's hearts and minds. If so, then the CCP has gone a long way toward preempting possible challenges from opposition forces and lowering the pressure for a truly democratic transition. As demonstrated by Shi and Lu, a large number of Chinese citizens actually were affected by the guardianship discourse and believed that a "genuine democracy" should focus more on the practice of paternalistic meritocracy. Because of this, many of them recognized the CCP regime as somewhat democratic.³⁷

If, however, people are exposed to distinct, competing discourses on democracy through alternative media sources, such as those from Taiwan and the United States, their views of the CCP's version of democracy might be challenged or even transformed. Furthermore, once they accept such ideas emphasizing procedures, freedom, and institutionalized protection of unalienable rights as the essential features of democracy, Chinese citizens should be more capable of discerning the CCP regime's authoritarian nature and, thus, more responsive to calls that seek a true democratic transition. Thus, we argue that a robust relationship between Chinese citizens' democratic conceptions and their exposure to different media sources (operationalized as a dichotomous variable) would demonstrate the effect of the CCP's media strategies directly targeting Chinese citizens' political attitudes.

Following pertinent research's differentiation between the guardianship discourse and liberal democracy discourse regarding their respectively proposed practice of democracy,³⁸ our survey used three pairs of questions to measure respondents' democratic conceptions: "In your opinion, which of the following two aspects should be more important to democratic politics?"³⁹ (1) "Public, fair, regular, and competitive elections for selecting government leaders" vs. "Government takes people's interests into consideration when making decisions;" (2) "People enjoy freedom of speech in criticizing the government" vs. "Government pays close attention to people's opinions;" and (3) "Majority rule" vs. "Government attaches the most importance to the majority of people's interest when making decisions." For each contrast, respondents' endorsement of the first statement as a more crucial aspect of democracy signaled their inclination toward an understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse, coded as 1; and their preference for the second statement indicated a democratic conception following the guardianship discourse that essentially promotes paternalistic meritocracy, coded as 0. Empirically, these three dichotomous measures are used as indicators of people's latent propensity for understanding democracy differently. To minimize the influence of measurement errors, the continuous latent construct is recovered through an Item Response Theory (IRT) measurement model and used in subsequent analyses, with a larger value indicating a higher propensity for embracing the liberal democracy discourse.⁴⁰

Collectivistic Orientation

The collectivistic orientation is another key variable in this paper for examining the effects of the CCP's second type of media strategies that targets nonpolitical values/norms through media campaigns and indoctrination. Collectivism has been intentionally promoted by the CCP ever since the Yan'an period (1935-1947), through its use of mass media and of the education system, and through family and workplace socialization. Role models promoted in the media like Norman Bethune and Lei Feng add to the numerous editorials and comments in newspapers like the *People's Daily* that speak to how collective interests should be voluntarily served even at the cost of individual interests. In 2007, the Chinese government launched its largest campaign since 1949 to select and promote "national moral models." Relevant media coverage has particularly emphasized how some have sacrificed their individual interests for collective interests.⁴¹ At first sight, a collectivistic orientation may appear irrelevant to people's democratic conceptions. However, a number of theoretical and empirical studies have established that this value serves as a key driving force in shaping democratic conceptions. In their historical analyses, both Nathan and Lorenzo argue that the normative prescription that individuals should serve the larger community (shared by both Confucianism and Leninism) has significantly shaped contemporary Chinese political discourses on democracy.⁴² In his examination of democratization in East Asia, Shin also decisively argues that the cultural values that require individuals to prioritize the interests of the collective over their own are incongruent with the "democratic principles of free participation and fair competition"; and "individualism is considered most compatible with democracy."⁴³ Empirically, individualistic orientation is

strongly associated with more emphasis on freedom and procedures in people's democratic conceptions. Collectivists, on the other hand, are more likely to prioritize equality and substantive output of regimes in their views of democracy.⁴⁴

Therefore, it is highly plausible that people exposed to diverse media sources, *ceteris paribus*, may acquire a different orientation toward the relationship between collective and individual interests than those attending only to the CCP's controlled media. And these people's more individualistic orientation may further shift their understanding of democracy away from the CCP's promoted guardianship discourse and toward the liberal democracy discourse that emphasizes procedures, freedom, and institutionalized protection of unalienable rights. However, given the stronger inertia in values/norms, compared to political attitudes, we expect this change in the normative orientations demands more persistent and intensive exposure to diverse media sources. Empirically, this cannot be effectively captured by a dichotomous measure of accessing foreign media. Therefore, we argue that if the relationship between respondents' intensity of media consumption and their normative orientations regarding the relationship between collective and individual interests varies significantly across distinct media environments (one- versus two-sided), we would have evidence for the effect of the CCP's media strategies targeting Chinese citizens' nonpolitical values/norms.

The survey asked respondents if they completely agreed, agreed, disagreed, or completely disagreed with following statements: (1) "When there is conflict between self-interest and national interest, people should sacrifice self-interest for national interest"; (2) "Generally speaking, individual interest should be secondary to collective interest"; and (3) "Sacrificing individual interest for collective interest is out of date (reverse coding)." Those who completely disagreed or disagreed with each statement were coded as 1, suggesting an individualistic orientation; and those who completely agreed or agreed were coded as 0, suggesting a collectivistic orientation. Similarly, these dichotomous measures are used as indicators of a continuous latent construct measuring people's normative orientations regarding the relationship between collective and individual interests. Again, to minimize the influence of measurement errors, an IRT model is used to recover the continuous latent construct for subsequent analyses, with a larger value indicating a higher level of individualistic orientation.⁴⁵

Distinct media environments and media consumption intensity are the key independent variables for our analysis. Instead of using one general question to measure whether respondents accessed foreign media, the survey asked them to provide a list of foreign newspapers, websites, TV programs, and radio programs they accessed, respectively, for news in the week before the survey.⁴⁶ Interviewers probed respondents several times and recorded up to six different answers for each of the four media outlets. Then the respondents' answers were coded to see if they did read newspapers, browse news websites, listen to radio stations or watch TV programs beyond the control of the CCP for news.⁴⁷ The survey showed that 1.49 percent of Xiamen respondents listened to Taiwanese radio programs for news, but none of the Chengdu respondents did.⁴⁸ In terms of accessing foreign newspapers, TV programs, and news

websites for news, there was no significant difference between the respondents in Xiamen and Chengdu: (1) 0.23 percent in Xiamen and 0.11 percent in Chengdu read foreign newspapers; (2) 6.80 percent in Xiamen and 9.51 percent in Chengdu watched foreign TV programs; and (3) 6.49 percent in Xiamen and 5.13 percent in Chengdu browsed foreign news websites. Altogether, 12.23 percent of the Xiamen respondents and 12.55 percent of the Chengdu respondents used foreign media through various channels for news.⁴⁹ This dichotomous variable is then used as the indicator of respondents' exposure to distinct media environments, with 0 indicating the one-sided information flow controlled by the CCP and 1 indicating the two-sided information flow through diverse media sources.⁵⁰

We recognize that this measure of people's use of non-CCP-controlled media sources is imperfect and may thus bias our estimates toward zero. Two pieces of information, however, increase our confidence in the effectiveness of this measure. (1) According to the survey, many respondents who used foreign media sources for news watched TV channels like CNN and Sky News, as well as China Television and ETTV News from Taiwan, and they browsed news websites such as MSN News, the New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal. The CCP has little influence over the information carried in these media, and these sources present views from a broad range of liberal democracies, including Taiwan, the United States, and the United Kingdom. (2) Later statistical analyses will show that respondents' official affiliation with the CCP is a significant predictor of their use of foreign media for news, even after controlling for their socioeconomic status, education, and political interest. These people are politically sensitive and motivated; and they are expected to pay attention to information more than just entertainment or commercial news.⁵¹ The following hypothesis will be tested using this dichotomous variable (i.e., media access).

H1: *Accessing media sources beyond the CCP's control is expected to significantly shift Chinese urbanites' understanding of democracy toward the liberal democracy discourse end of the scale.*

As previously discussed, to effectively examine the effects of Chinese urbanites' accessing foreign media on their nonpolitical values/norms that are also targeted by the CCP's media strategies, we need information on their habits and intensity of media consumption. For this purpose, the survey asked the standard question: "Generally, how often do you read, listen to, watch, or browse political news? Would you say several times a day, once each day, several times per week, one or two times per week, or less than once per week?" This ordinal variable is used as the indicator of the respondents' habit/intensity of media consumption, with a larger value standing for higher intensity.

We also recognize that there are some issues with examining media effects using "media exposure intensity," rather than media attentiveness or knowledge.⁵² Nevertheless, given that our interest here is democratic conceptions and nonpolitical values/norms rather than more specific issues like corruption or pension reform, it is difficult to measure respondents' pertinent media attentiveness or knowledge. Again, empirically, if this is a problem then this general measure will bias our estimates

toward zero on the effects of the CCP's strategies of media control. The following hypothesis will be tested using this ordinal variable (i.e., media exposure intensity).

H2: *A significant negative relationship between media consumption intensity and individualistic orientation is expected among those exposed only to the controlled media. And a less significant or even insignificant relationship is expected among those exposed to both kinds of media.*

Furthermore, to demonstrate the significance of nonpolitical values/norms for understanding political attitudes in contemporary China, the following hypothesis will be tested simultaneously.

H3: *Regardless of the nature of media environments, an individualistic orientation is expected to generate significantly greater support of the liberal democracy discourse.*

Control variables:⁵³ A number of variables identified by relevant literature are included as controls: (1) respondents' demographic and socioeconomic features, including gender, age, education, and location of residence;⁵⁴ (2) any personal contact with Americans;⁵⁵ (3) general impression of the United States;⁵⁶ and (4) official affiliation with the CCP;⁵⁷ and (5) general political interest.⁵⁸

Empirical Strategy and Modeling Choices

We employ a two-step empirical strategy to examine the effects of the two types of media strategies in sequence. In the first step, we test for the effect of exposure to diverse media sources compared to exposure only to those under the control of the CCP. Theoretically, if the CCP's media strategies directly targeting political attitudes work, those without exposure to alternative media sources are expected to be more greatly indoctrinated into supporting "democracy with Chinese characteristics." In the second step, we examine the effect of the CCP's other type of media strategy, one that targets nonpolitical values/norms. Theoretically, once embedded in distinct media environments (i.e., controlled media only vs. controlled plus foreign media), Chinese urbanites' intensity of media consumption is expected to have varying impacts on their normative orientations regarding the relationship between collective and individual interests, which, in turn, shape their democratic conceptions. In other words, people's intensity of media consumption, given their embeddedness in distinct media environments, indirectly influences their democratic conceptions via shifting normative orientations in different ways.

Treatment Effect Models and Media Strategies Directly Targeting Political Attitudes

It is well known that people's choice of media sources is highly self-motivated.⁵⁹ Without accounting for this self-selection process, inferences on media effects are

usually inconsistent and biased.⁶⁰ One way to correct for this selection bias is to use natural, laboratory, or field experiments that randomly assign people to different media environments.⁶¹ Unfortunately, new information technologies level the playing field for accessing foreign media in contemporary urban China, eliminating Xiamen's geographical advantage in accessing foreign media. Thus, we can no longer treat the data from Xiamen and Chengdu as the outcome of a natural experiment. To account for self-selection bias in our survey data then, we take the second-best approach, employing statistical corrections, in our case using both treatment effect modeling and matching techniques. Treatment effect modeling is the classical approach: one equation models the self-selection process for the treatment variable (exposure to distinct media environments); the second equation simultaneously estimates the effect of the treatment variable. The error terms of the two equations are assumed to be correlated.⁶² Statistically, estimating the selection equation and the correlated error terms of the two equations can effectively account for all observed and unobserved differences between the treatment and control groups, thus making the two groups comparable. An alternative strategy is matching, which has been developed to statistically account for all observed and unobserved differences between treated and untreated subjects. Using propensity scores or in other ways employing observed features of the data, researchers can select observations that are very similar to each other on pertinent aspects, except for the treatment variable, from the "treatment" and "control" groups. Then these "matched" observations are used to estimate the treatment effect. After matching, remaining differences between the two pairs of subjects can be effectively attributed to the treatment variable.⁶³ By using both statistical techniques, we will be more confident of the estimated effect of the CCP's media strategies directly targeting political attitudes if the two methods yield similar results. H1 will be the focus of this exercise.

Multigroup Structural Equation Models (SEM) and Media Strategies Targeting Nonpolitical Values/Norms

H2 hypothesizes that Chinese urban residents' differential consumption of diverse vs. controlled media may yield differing normative orientations regarding the relationship between collective and individual interests. H3 further suggests that these normative orientations, in turn, are expected to exert a significant influence over their democratic conceptions. Here, the indicator of respondents' exposure to distinct media environments is expected to be a *moderating* variable. The conventional approach to test moderating effects would be to estimate numerous interaction items in multiple regressions. This approach is, however, not only cumbersome but also complicated by our use of latent constructs. Therefore, we employ multigroup SEM.

Multigroup SEM has been used to examine measurement invariance across groups.⁶⁴ The underlying idea is simple: the same model is simultaneously estimated for multiple groups, in our case, those exposed only to controlled media vs. those exposed to diverse, including noncontrolled media. Two sets of estimates are compared. One set constrains the coefficients of interest to be the same in both groups. The second relaxes those constraints and allows for differences between the two groups.

Then the two sets of estimates are compared to test whether the coefficients of interest are statistically equivalent between the two groups.⁶⁵ If the data support the null hypothesis of equality, the inference then is that the grouping-variable does not have a moderating effect. Otherwise, researchers can reject the null hypothesis and, thus, infer that the grouping-variable has a significant moderating effect.⁶⁶

We use multigroup SEM to examine the impact of media consumption intensity on people's individualistic orientations to test whether it is statistically equivalent between people who are exposed and those who are not exposed to foreign media. If it is not equivalent, we conclude that distinct media environments affect the influence of the CCP's media campaigns on indoctrinating its citizens with collectivism. This provides empirical evidence for the effect of the CCP's media strategies targeting nonpolitical values/norms.⁶⁷ H2 and H3 will be the focus of this set of analyses.

Like most survey data, our survey has missing values, primarily due to item nonresponse. We generate five imputed full data sets through *Amelia II*. Then we analyze the imputed data using Rubin's rule.⁶⁸

Empirical Results

Insignificant Effects of Media Strategies Directly Targeting Political Attitudes

The results of both the OLS regressions with matched samples (M1 and M2) and the treatment effect models (M3 and M4 with two-step consistent estimators) are presented in Table 1. The question here is whether using alternative media sources beyond the CCP's control exerted a significant influence over our respondents' democratic conceptions (**H1**).

The coefficient of the "using foreign media" variable, in Table 1, is in the correct direction but not statistically significant. Basically, regardless of the modeling techniques used and the control variables included, respondents who used foreign media sources were no more likely to understand democracy following the liberal democracy discourse. In other words, there is not sufficient evidence in our data for finding a significant effect of the CCP's media strategies directly targeting Chinese urbanites' democratic conceptions.⁶⁹ This result is consistent with Kern and Hainmueller's findings in East Germany. However, as previously discussed, this null finding might be due to our imperfect measure of respondents' exposure to distinct media environments.⁷⁰ Therefore, without more refined measures, we take this only as preliminary rather than conclusive evidence.

M2 and M4 in Table 1 also illustrate that the other key variable, i.e., "individualism," does consistently and significantly shift the respondents' views of democracy toward the liberal democracy discourse end of the scale. A natural question is to ask whether accessing foreign media (measured dichotomously) changes people's individualistic orientations. Therefore, we run the same analyses as reported in Table 1, substituting "individualism" as the dependent variable. Once again, the results lead us to conclude that using free media *per se* does not have a significant direct effect on

Table 1. Effect of Accessing Foreign Media on Democratic Conceptions.

	OLS with Matched Data ^b		OLS with Treatment Selection			
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M3	M4
	Understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse ^a	Understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse ^a	Understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse ^a	Understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse ^a	Using foreign media (treatment equation)	Using foreign media (treatment equation)
Age	0.0001 (0.002)	0.0003 (0.002)	0.000 (0.001)	0.0004 (0.001)	-0.007 (0.004)*	-0.007 (0.004)*
Male	-0.037 (0.040)	-0.030 (0.040)	0.027 (0.020)	0.022 (0.20)	0.150 (0.089)*	0.150 (0.089)*
Education	0.017 (0.008)**	0.019 (0.008)**	-0.0004 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.005)	0.093 (0.015)***	0.093 (0.015)***
Contact with Americans	-0.086 (0.075)	-0.104 (0.075)	0.044 (0.043)	0.026 (0.043)	0.200 (0.207)	0.200 (0.207)
Using foreign media	0.037 (0.038)	0.033 (0.037)	0.141 (0.202)	0.035 (0.013)***	0.092 (0.024)***	0.092 (0.024)***
Impression of the USA		0.009 (0.024)		0.054 (0.021)**		0.054 (0.021)**
Individualism		0.123 (0.042)***		0.021 (0.091)		0.021 (0.091)
Residence of Xiamen	0.025 (0.038)	0.025 (0.038)	0.057 (0.021)***	0.079 (0.061)	0.212 (0.095)**	0.212 (0.095)**
Political interest	0.049 (0.031)	0.042 (0.031)		-0.146 (0.066)**		-0.146 (0.066)**
Affiliation with the CCP	-0.068 (0.042)	-0.067 (0.042)		0.021 (0.091)		0.021 (0.091)
Constant	-0.287 (0.145)**	-0.344 (0.166)*	-0.024 (0.053)	-2.395 (0.272)***	-2.395 (0.272)***	-2.395 (0.272)***
Observations	N = 393	N = 393	Lambda = -0.076 (0.110) N = 1606	Lambda = -0.112 (0.112) N = 1606		

Source: 2005 Two-City Survey in Mainland China (N = 1606). Notes: a. Continuous factor scores based on IRT measurement models. Matched through the Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM) procedure in STATA 11.

Averaged coefficients in cells with averaged standard errors in parentheses.

Estimated with 5 data sets imputed through Amelia II.

Two-tailed * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01.

respondents' individualistic orientations.⁷¹ As previously discussed, this null finding is consistent with the idea that, due to the stronger inertia in values and norms (compared to political attitudes), the possible effects of consuming foreign media on values/norms may not be effectively captured by the dichotomous measure. Nevertheless, we do expect that more persistent and intensive exposure to distinct media sources may have varying influence over people's nonpolitical values/norms.

Significant Effects of Media Strategies Targeting Nonpolitical Values/Norms

To effectively identify the possible effects of the CCP's media strategies targeting nonpolitical values/norms, we need to ensure that any moderating effects of using distinct media sources are not confounded by unobserved differences between the two cities.⁷² With respondents' location of residence and their use of different media sources, all respondents can be placed into one of the four groups: (G1) residents of Chengdu using domestic media only; (G2) residents of Chengdu using both domestic and foreign media; (G3) residents of Xiamen using domestic media only; and (G4) residents of Xiamen using both domestic and foreign media. The resulting multigroup SEM analyses comparing G1 and G3 or comparing G2 and G4 can effectively test for the moderating effects of any unobserved differences between Xiamen and Chengdu. The results of the multigroup SEM analysis comparing G1 and G3 are presented in Table 2.

A nested Chi-square test shows that all path coefficients can be set equal between the residents of the two cities who only used domestic media.⁷³ Hence, the data allow us to conclude that there are no significant moderating effects of the unobserved differences between Xiamen and Chengdu. Furthermore, as shown in the second and fourth columns of Table 2, given controls, "individualism" is the only variable showing a significant direct impact on respondents' conceptions of democracy. The more individualistic are Chinese urbanites, the more likely are they to understand democracy in liberal-democratic terms. "Media consumption intensity" has no significant direct impact on respondents' democratic conceptions; nevertheless, as shown in the third and fifth columns of Table 2, among the respondents using domestic controlled media only, "media consumption intensity" has a significant direct negative impact on "individualism": the more frequently they reported using the media, the more they adopted the collectivistic norm promoted by the CCP.⁷⁴ This collectivistic orientation, in turn, significantly leads the respondents away from the liberal democracy discourse and increases their chances of adopting the CCP's preferred guardianship discourse featuring paternalistic meritocracy.

How about Chinese urbanites embedded in a more diverse media environment? The results of a similar multigroup SEM comparing G2 and G4 are presented in Table 3.

A nested Chi-square test once again shows that all path coefficients and factor loadings in Table 3 can be fixed to be equal between the residents of Xiamen and Chengdu who availed themselves of both foreign and domestic media.⁷⁵ Once again, we do not find sufficient evidence for the moderating effects of any unobserved differences

Table 2. Multigroup SEM for Domestic Media Users Only.

	Residents of Chengdu Using Domestic Media Only		Residents of Xiamen Using Domestic Media Only	
	Understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse	Individualism	Understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse	Individualism
<i>Measurement Models</i>				
DI	1.000 ^a		1.000 ^a	
D2	0.844 ^b (0.145) ^{***}		0.844 (0.145) ^{***}	
D3	1.381 (0.246) ^{***}		1.381 (0.246) ^{***}	
INDI		1.000 ^a		1.000 ^a
IND2		1.126 (0.155) ^{***}		1.126 (0.155) ^{***}
IND3		0.849 (0.123) ^{***}		0.849 (0.123) ^{***}
<i>Structural Models</i>				
Age	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.010 (0.004) ^{***}	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.010 (0.004) ^{***}
Education	0.014 (0.010)	-0.036 (0.013) ^{***}	0.014 (0.010)	-0.036 (0.013) ^{***}
Male	0.081 (0.077)	0.175 (0.090) [*]	0.081 (0.077)	0.175 (0.090) [*]
Media consumption intensity	0.024 (0.032)	-0.167 (0.037) ^{***}	0.024 (0.032)	-0.167 (0.037) ^{***}
Contact with Americans	0.203 (0.199)	0.377 (0.215) [*]	0.203 (0.199)	0.377 (0.215) [*]
Impression of the USA	0.058 (0.046)		0.058 (0.046)	
Individualism	0.278 (0.090) ^{***}		0.278 (0.090) ^{***}	
CFI		Mean = 0.944, SD = 0.011		
TLI		Mean = 0.928, SD = 0.014		
RMSEA		Mean = 0.026, SD = 0.003		
Observations		1407		

Source: 2005 Two-City Survey in Mainland China (N = 1606).

Notes: ^aFor identification purposes, this parameter has been fixed to 1.

^bAll measurement model indicators are binary variables.

Averaged coefficients in cells (WLSMV estimation).

Averaged standard errors, corrected for the design effect of complex sampling, in parentheses.

Estimated with M-plus 6.1, with 5 data sets imputed through Amelia II.

Two-tailed * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$.

between Xiamen and Chengdu. The second and fourth columns of Table 3 again reveal that “individualism” is a significant predictor of support for liberal democracy. Even so, Table 2 and 3 give very different pictures of how Chinese urbanites’ “media consumption intensity” indirectly changes their views of democracy: embedded in a diverse media environment (as shown in the third and fifth columns of Table 3), “media consumption intensity” is not a significant predictor of “individualism”: heavy media users are no different from occasional users regarding their individualistic orientations.

The results in Table 2 and 3 provide some initial evidence for the effect of the CCP’s strategies of media control that target nonpolitical values/norms (H2), as well as its indirect but consequential influence over Chinese urbanites’ critical political attitudes (H3). In other words, media environment, *per se*, appears to matter most in transforming how people’s intensity of media consumption shapes their orientations

Table 3. Multigroup SEM for Diverse Media Users Only.

	Residents of Chengdu Using both Domestic and Foreign Media		Residents of Xiamen Using both Domestic and Foreign Media	
	Understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse	Individualism	Understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse	Individualism
<i>Measurement Models</i>				
D1	1.000 ^a		1.000 ^a	
D2	1.286 ^b (0.353) ^{***}		1.286 ^b (0.353) ^{***}	
D3	0.996 (0.201) ^{***}		0.996 (0.201) ^{***}	
IND1		1.000 ^a		1.000 ^a
IND2		1.224 (0.325) ^{***}		1.224 (0.325) ^{***}
IND3		0.920 (0.233) ^{***}		0.920 (0.233) ^{***}
<i>Structural Models</i>				
Age	-0.002 (0.010)	0.012 (0.010)	-0.002 (0.010)	0.012 (0.010)
Education	0.047 (0.049)	0.017 (0.023)	0.047 (0.049)	0.017 (0.023)
Male	0.258 (0.237)	-0.137 (0.139)	0.258 (0.237)	-0.137 (0.139)
Media consumption intensity	-0.004 (0.091)	0.016 (0.056)	-0.004 (0.091)	0.016 (0.056)
Contact with Americans	0.004 (0.365)	-0.103 (0.159)	0.004 (0.365)	-0.103 (0.159)
Impression of the USA	0.045 (0.126)		0.045 (0.126)	
Individualism	0.550 (0.177) ^{***}		0.550 (0.177) ^{***}	
CFI		Mean = 0.998, SD = 0.004		
TLI		Mean = 0.999, SD = 0.012		
RMSEA		Mean = 0.003, SD = 0.006		
Observations		199		

Source: 2005 Two-City Survey in Mainland China (N = 1606).

Notes: ^aFor identification purposes, this parameter has been fixed to 1.

^bAll measurement model indicators are binary variables. Averaged coefficients in cells (WLSMV estimation).

Averaged standard errors, corrected for the design effect of complex sampling, in parentheses.

Estimated with M-plus 6.1, with 5 data sets imputed through Amelia II.

Two-tailed * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01.

regarding the relationship between collective and individual interests, which, in turn, exert significant influence over their democratic conceptions.

Due to the lack of moderating effects driven by any unobserved differences between Xiamen and Chengdu, we can run a multigroup SEM comparing respondents using domestic media only and those using both domestic and foreign media, that is, comparing (G1+G3) to (G2+G4). This exercise can effectively tell whether the varying relationships revealed in Table 2 and 3 are statistically meaningful.⁷⁶ And the results of this multigroup SEM are presented in Table 4.

As shown in Table 4, a nested Chi-square test leads us to conclude that all but two coefficients can be fixed to be equal between those who used domestic media only and those who used both controlled and free media.⁷⁷

The path coefficient linking “media consumption intensity” with “individualism” cannot be fixed equal across the two groups (H2). More specifically, among those embedded in a controlled media environment (as shown in the third column of Table

Table 4. Multigroup SEM for Respondents Embedded in Distinct Media Environments.

	Residents Using Domestic Media Only		Residents Using both Domestic and Foreign Media	
	Understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse	Individualism	Understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse	Individualism
<i>Measurement Models</i>				
D1	1.000 ^a		1.000 ^a	
D2	1.373 ^b (0.194) ^{***}		1.373 ^b (0.194) ^{***}	
D3	1.399 (0.170) ^{***}		1.399 (0.170) ^{***}	
IND1		1.000 ^a		1.000 ^a
IND2		1.015 (0.129) ^{***}		1.015 (0.129) ^{***}
IND3		0.825 (0.101) ^{***}		0.825 (0.101) ^{***}
<i>Structural Models</i>				
Age	0.001 (0.002)	-0.007 (0.003) ^{**}	0.001 (0.002)	-0.007 (0.003) ^{**}
Education	0.006 (0.006)	-0.030 (0.010) ^{***}	0.006 (0.006)	-0.030 (0.010) ^{***}
Male	0.050 (0.044)	0.138 (0.069) ^{**}	0.050 (0.044)	0.138 (0.069) ^{**}
Media consumption intensity	0.022 (0.018)	-0.122 (0.026) ^{***}	0.022 (0.018)	0.004 (0.197)
Contact with Americans	0.049 (0.096)	0.204 (0.169)	0.049 (0.096)	0.204 (0.169)
Residence in Xiamen	0.120 (0.049) ^{**}	0.095 (0.073)	0.120 (0.049) ^{**}	0.095 (0.073)
Impression of the USA	0.080 (0.030) ^{***}		0.047 (0.083)	
Individualism	0.151 (0.056) ^{***}		0.151 (0.056) ^{***}	
CFI		Mean = 0.975, SD = 0.006		
TLI		Mean = 0.968, SD = 0.008		
RMSEA		Mean = 0.016, SD = 0.002		
Observations		1606		

Source: 2005 Two-City Survey in Mainland China (N = 1606).

Notes: ^aFor identification purposes, this parameter has been fixed to 1.

^bAll measurement model indicators are binary variables.

Averaged coefficients in cells (WLSMV estimation).

Averaged standard errors, corrected for the design effect of complex sampling, in parentheses.

Estimated with M-plus 6.1, with 5 data sets imputed through Amelia II.

Two-tailed * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01.

4), heavy media consumers are more likely to adopt a collectivistic orientation. Conversely, among those embedded in a diverse media environment (as shown in the fifth column of Table 4), more intensive media consumption does *not* significantly increase their internalization of the collectivistic norm. To more effectively demonstrate the varying influence of “media consumption intensity” on “individualism,” as moderated by the different media environments, we have run a pooled SEM model that includes the interaction item between “media consumption intensity” and “using foreign media” and summarized the key finding in Figure 1. In the pooled SEM model, the *p*-value of the interaction item is 0.048.⁷⁸

As illustrated in Figure 1, the path coefficient linking “media consumption intensity” with “individualism” for the respondents who have only used domestic media is negative and the upper boundary of its 90 percent CI stays below the x-axis (i.e., *p*-value = 0.000). Meanwhile, the path coefficient for those who have used both

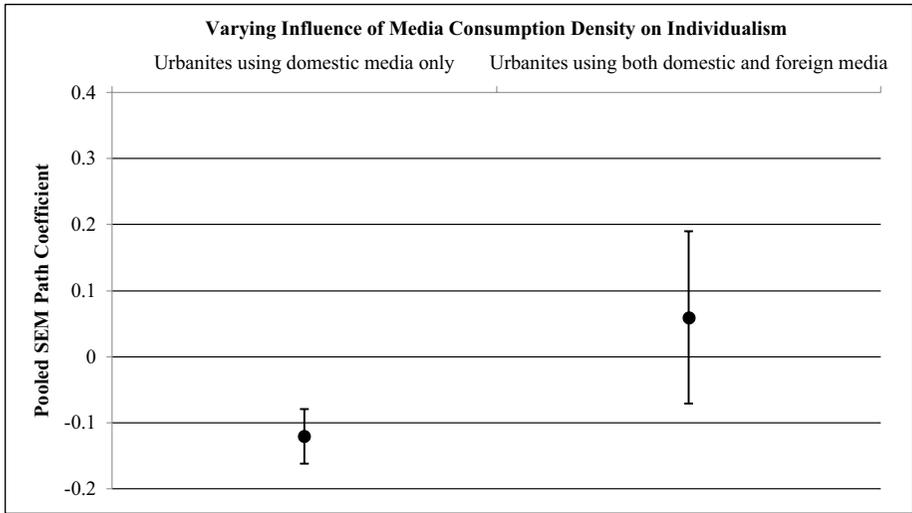


Figure 1. Media Environment’s Moderating Effect.

domestic and foreign media is positive but the lower boundary of its 90 percent CI extends below the x-axis (i.e., p -value = 0.453).

It is worth noting that “individualism” (as shown in the second and fourth columns of Table 4) has the same significant impact on people’s democratic conceptions, regardless of the nature of media environments. More specifically, a higher level of collectivistic orientation leads to greater support for the CCP-promoted guardianship discourse of democracy featuring paternalistic meritocracy (H3). In summary, accessing alternative media sources beyond the CCP’s control does indirectly shape how Chinese urban residents respond to the CCP’s indoctrination on democracy. Moreover, as previously discussed, our general measure of “media consumption intensity,” rather than specific media attentiveness or knowledge, might bias our analysis here toward null findings. Thus, these results confirm the significant effect of authoritarian China’s media strategies targeting its people’s nonpolitical values/norms.

Robustness check: One might wonder if those who used foreign media sources were also more likely to be heavy media users. Basically, the co-variation between these two variables could have biased our inferences. To address this concern, as well as to provide a check of the robustness of our findings, we model the media choice process directly using the classical Heckman selection model.⁷⁹ We then simultaneously estimate the impact of “media consumption intensity” on “individualism” among those embedded in different media environments separately. The results are presented in Table 5.

As shown Table 5, after accounting for the self-selection process, “media consumption intensity” is negatively and significantly associated with “individualism” among respondents who only used domestic media (the second column); however, this

Table 5. Robustness Check with Heckman Selection Models on Individualism.

	Residents Using Domestic Media Only		Residents Using both Domestic and Foreign Media	
	Individualism	Using Domestic Media (selection equation)	Individualism ^a	Using Both Domestic and Foreign Media (selection equation)
Age	-0.003 (0.001)***	0.007 (0.004)*	0.002 (0.005)	-0.007 (0.004)**
Education	0.000 (0.007)	-0.093 (0.015)***	0.034 (0.037)	0.093 (0.015)***
Male	0.070 (0.029)**	-0.150 (0.089)*	0.010 (0.098)	0.150 (0.089)*
Media consumption intensity	-0.049 (0.009)***		0.013 (0.034)	
Contact with Americans	0.083 (0.056)		0.025 (0.111)	
Residence in Xiamen	0.034 (0.027)	-0.021 (0.091)	0.153 (0.080)*	0.021 (0.091)
Political interest		-0.079 (0.061)		0.079 (0.061)
Affiliation with the CCP		-0.212 (0.095)**		0.212 (0.095)**
Constant	0.389 (0.070)***	2.395 (0.272)***		-2.395 (0.272)***
Lamda		-0.428(0.221)*		0.422(0.404)

Source: 2005 Two-City Survey in Mainland China (N = 1606).

Notes: ^aContinuous factor score based on IRT measurement models.

Averaged coefficients in cells (two-step consistent estimates).

Averaged standard errors, corrected for the design effect of complex sampling, in parentheses.

Estimated with 5 data sets imputed through Amelia II.

Two-tailed * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01.

relationship is insignificant among those accessed both domestic and foreign media (the fourth column). Hence, our previous findings cannot simply be attributed to selection effects.⁸⁰

Conclusions and Suggestions

Building upon contemporary research on media effects in authoritarian societies, we examine the effects of the CCP's media control on the democratic conceptions and collectivistic norms among its urban residents. This paper differs from most existing research in the comparative literature that primarily focuses on the media control strategies in authoritarian societies that directly target critical political attitudes like democratic conceptions, through such measures as information manipulation, framing, censoring, and discourse cultivation. We argue that, in addition to this set of media strategies, authoritarian leaders also adopt another set of media strategies, those that target their citizens' nonpolitical values and norms, such as the public's collectivistic orientations. Though such values/norms may seem politically irrelevant at first sight, they may have serious implications for the political dynamics of these societies and thus affect critical political attitudes. Further, people's exposure to alternative media sources beyond the authoritarian leaders' control may challenge and even thwart both types of media strategies. Thus, to evaluate media effects in authoritarian societies comprehensively, we have to take both types of media strategies into consideration.

Empirically, we follow a new line of research on media effects in authoritarian societies by contrasting Chinese domestic media with foreign media to examine the effects of the CCP's various strategies of media control more effectively. Our approach not only provides some original evidence to help assess the external validity of the findings of this new line of research, but also generates some novel information and a much more nuanced understanding of how China's mass media influence its public opinion.

Using a two-city survey from China, we study the possible effects of the CCP's different media strategies. The extent to which Chinese urbanites have accepted the guardianship discourse on democracy featuring paternalistic meritocracy—intentionally cultivated and promoted by the CCP to lower possible pressure for a democratic transition—is the key variable for testing the effect of the media strategies directly targeting critical political attitudes. The extent to which Chinese urban residents have internalized a collectivistic orientation, normatively prioritizing collective interests over individual ones, is, in turn, the key variable for testing the effect of the CCP's another type of media strategies targeting nonpolitical values and norms.

After using appropriate modeling techniques to account for the self-selection bias in our observational data, we do not find sufficient evidence for the significant effect of the media strategies directly targeting critical political attitudes: using foreign media *per se* does not significantly counteract the CCP's effort to promote its preferred view of democracy with a nature of paternalistic meritocracy. We do recognize that our imperfect measure of Chinese urbanites' exposure to distinct media environments might have contributed to this null finding; thus, we urge more refined measures be adopted in future research to reexamine the effects of media strategies directly targeting critical political attitudes in authoritarian societies. Nevertheless, we do find sufficient and robust evidence for the significant effect of the media strategies targeting nonpolitical values/norms. For Chinese urbanites limited to domestic media only, more intensive media consumption leads to a higher level of collectivism. For those using both domestic and foreign media, more intensive media consumption does not have the comparable significant effect. Furthermore, by showing that a collectivistic orientation—regardless of the nature of media environments—always makes Chinese urbanites more likely to accept the CCP-promoted guardianship discourse on democracy, we conclude that using foreign media does have significant but indirect effects on Chinese urbanites' democratic conceptions. In other words, the Chinese government is impotent in promoting the internalization of collectivism and thus less competent in promoting the adoption of the guardianship discourse of democracy among those using alternative media sources, as the CCP is able to achieve among those without such access.

Although our data are observational and based on a sample drawn from only two cities,⁸¹ they do suggest the value of our approach in examining media effects in authoritarian societies, in general, and also shed light on contemporary China's media system, in particular. More specifically, media effects in authoritarian societies could be much more nuanced than what existing research has found. They may include not

just direct media effects on critical political attitudes, but also possible indirect media effects on such political attitudes via shaping social values/norms. To effectively understand media effects in authoritarian societies, researchers should pay more attention to various strategies of media control that authoritarian leaders adopt (here, regional experts and detailed qualitative studies can be of great value).

Appendix

Survey Sampling and Implementation

Xiamen and Chengdu are the two strata. The PSUs are square grids of half degrees of longitude by half degrees of latitude. In Chengdu, there were 768 grids. In Xiamen, there were 177 grids. A total of 30 PSUs were selected for Chengdu and 20 PSUs for Xiamen. Some of the selected grids fell on water or rice fields and thus have no residents. After excluding them, there were 27 PSUs for Chengdu and 18 PSUs for Xiamen. The Secondary Sampling Units (SSUs) are smaller square grids of 90 meters by 90 meters within each selected PSU. We collected all addresses within each SSU. The Fifth Census Data collected in 2000 was used to define primary and secondary square grids and to calculate the population density of each PSU for subsequent stages of sampling. The end result is that 1,141 households in Chengdu and 1,197 households in Xiamen were randomly selected for interviewing. The project hired and trained 78 and 80 university students majoring social sciences from Chengdu and Xiamen as interviewers. All participated in a four-day training course and passed a formal examination before going to the field. They successfully interviewed 801 respondents in Chengdu and 805 respondents in Xiamen, which reflect response rates of 70.2 percent for the former and 60.3 percent for the latter.

Table A1. Summary Statistics of Key Variables.

	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	Missing
Age	36.323	13.973	18	70	0.00%
Male	0.499	0.500	0	1	0.00%
Education	11.022	4.051	0	23	4.61%
Contact with Americans	0.052	0.221	0	1	0.37%
Impression of the USA	3.197	0.761	1	5	7.60%
Using foreign media	0.124	0.330	0	1	0.00%
Media consumption intensity	3.582	1.375	1	5	1.49%
Residence of Xiamen	0.501	0.500	0	1	0.00%
Political interest	2.203	0.773	1	4	1.25%
Individualism IRT score	0.072	0.437	-0.191	1.425	2.55%
Understanding of democracy IRT score	0.034	0.359	-0.290	0.866	0.00%

Source: 2005 Two-City Survey in Mainland China (N = 1606).

Table A2. Effect of Accessing Foreign Media on Individualism.

	OLS with Matched Data ^b		OLS with Treatment Selection	
	Individualism/		Individualism ^a	Using foreign media (treatment equation)
Age	-0.001 (0.003)		-0.003 (0.001)***	-0.007 (0.004)*
Male	-0.052 (0.054)		0.045 (0.026)*	0.150 (0.089)*
Education	-0.018 (0.010)*		-0.006 (0.005)	0.093 (0.015)***
Contact with Americans	0.129 (0.094)		0.081 (0.051)	
Using foreign media	0.037 (0.049)		-0.420 (0.233) ^c	
Residence of Xiamen	0.013 (0.049)		0.059 (0.025)**	0.021 (0.091)
Political interest	0.044 (0.041)			0.079 (0.061)
Affiliation with the CCP	-0.006 (0.058)			0.212 (0.095)**
Constant	0.236 (0.187)		0.259 (0.062)***	-2.395 (0.272)***
	N = 393		Lambda = 0.254 (0.127)	** N = 1606

Source: 2005 Two-City Survey in Mainland China (N = 1606).

Notes: ^aContinuous factor scores based on IRT measurement models.

^bMatched through the Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM) procedure in STATA 11.

^cWe have a one-tailed hypothesis (foreign media has a direct, positive effect on individualistic orientation).

Therefore, the wrong sign means that we cannot reject the null hypothesis.

Averaged coefficients in cells with averaged standard errors in parentheses.

Estimated with 5 data sets imputed through Amelia II.

Two-tailed * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01.

Table A3. Robustness Check with Selection Models on Democratic Conceptions.

	Residents Using Domestic Media Only		Residents Using both Domestic and Foreign Media	
	Understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse ^a	Using Domestic Media (selection equation)	Understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse ^a	Using Both Domestic and Foreign Media (selection equation)
Age	0.000 (0.001)	-0.007 (0.004)*	0.000 (0.004)	-0.007 (0.004)*
Education	-0.002 (0.006)	0.093 (0.015)***	0.019 (0.029)	0.093 (0.015)***
Male	0.018 (0.022)	0.150 (0.089)*	0.076 (0.074)	0.150 (0.089)*
Media consumption intensity	0.007 (0.007)		0.0003 (0.028)	
Individualisma	0.081 (0.026)***		0.180 (0.060)***	
Contact with Americans	0.047 (0.050)		-0.031 (0.098)	
Impression of the USA	0.037 (0.013)***		0.017 (0.036)	
Residence in Xiamen	0.053 (0.022)**	0.021 (0.091)	0.071 (0.071)	0.021 (0.091)
Political interest		0.079 (0.061)		0.079 (0.061)
Affiliation with the CCP		0.212 (0.095)**		0.212 (0.095)**
Constant	-0.153 (0.067)**	-2.395 (0.272)***	-0.468 (0.865)	-2.395 (0.272)***
Lambda	0.106 (0.185)		0.066 (0.324)	

Source: 2005 Two-City Survey in Mainland China (N = 1606).

Notes: ^a Continuous factor score based on IRT measurement models.

Averaged coefficients in cells (two-step consistent estimates).

Averaged standard errors, corrected for the design effect of complex sampling, in parentheses.

Estimated with 5 data sets imputed through Amelia II.

Two-tailed * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01.

Table A4. Demographic Features of Surveyed Chinese Urban Residents.

	2005 National Statistics	2005 Two-City Survey	2007 World Values Survey
Percentage of males	0.491	0.486 [0.451, 0.522]	0.507 [0.475, 0.539]
Average age ^a	42.35	37.41 [36.32, 38.49]	41.48 [40.60, 42.37]
Average education ^b	n.a.	11.43 [11.16, 11.69]	11.52 [11.26, 11.78]

Sources: 2006 Yearbook of National Statistics, 2005 Two-City Survey (N = 1606), 2007 World Values Survey Mainland China (N = 2015).

Notes: Weighted statistics in cells for the two surveys, with 95% confidence intervals in parentheses.

^aAge in years.

^bYears of formal education.

Acknowledgments

Earlier versions of this paper were presented at workshops organized by American University and Duke University. We thank Jan Leighley, Danny Hayes, Jennifer Lawless, Antoine Yoshinaka, Matthew Wright, Todd Eisenstadt, Emerson Niou, Xun Cao, Xi Chen, Xiaobo Lu, and Haifeng Huang for their comments. We also would like to thank the editors and reviewers of *Politics & Society* for their valuable suggestions. All remaining errors are ours.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
2. http://news.xinhuanet.com/theory/2011-04/27/c_121354358.htm
3. See, among others, R. Gunther and A. Mughan, *Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ki-Sung Kwak, *Media and Democratic Transition in South Korea* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Lise Garon, *Dangerous Allies: Civil Society, the Media, and Democratic Transition in North Africa* (New York: Zed Books Ltd., 2003).
4. J. J. Mondak, *Nothing to Read: Newspapers and Elections in a Social Experiment* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 12.
5. See, among others, B. Geddes and John Zaller, "Sources of Popular Support for Authoritarian Regimes," *American Journal of Political Science* 33, no. 2 (1989): 319-47; Daniela Stockmann and Mary Gallagher, "Remote Control: How the Media Sustain Authoritarian Rule in China," *Comparative Political Studies* 44, no. 4 (2011):436-67.

6. See, among others, Susan L. Shirk, ed. *Changing Media, Changing China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Daniela Stockmann, *Media Commercialization and Authoritarian Rule in China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
7. Holger Lutz Kern and Jens Hainmueller, "Opium for the Masses: How Foreign Media Can Stabilize Authoritarian Regimes," *Political Analysis* 17(2009):377-99; Ruben Enikolopov, Maria Petrova, and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya, "Media and Political Persuasion: Evidence from Russia," *American Economic Review* 101, no. 7 (2011):3253-85; Holger Lutz Kern, "Foreign Media and Protest Diffusion in Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of the 1989 East German Revolution," *Comparative Political Studies* 44, no. 9 (2011):1179-205.
8. Kern and Hainmueller, "Opium for the Masses"; Enikolopov, Petrova, and Zhuravskaya, "Media and Political Persuasion; Stockmann, *Media Commercialization and Authoritarian Rule in China*; Stockmann and Gallagher, "Remote Control."
9. See, among others, L. Wedeen, "Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 96(2002):713-28; L. Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Authoritarian regimes also control media to prevent possible political coordination and mobilization. Due to data and space limitations, we do not address this issue here.
10. Wenfang Tang and Shanto Iyengar, "The Emerging Media System in China: Implications for Regime Change," *Political Communication* 28, no. 3 (2011):263-67, 265.
11. L. M. Bartels, "Messages Received: The Political Impact of Media Exposure," *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 2 (1993):267-85.
12. Some people may argue that the cynicism about China's media could be so generalized that it is unlikely that the Chinese media effectively affect their audience's attitudes. Nevertheless, recent research has shown that (1) the Chinese people actively acquire political information from China's media (for which TV remains the dominant medium); and (2) China's media plays a critical role in shaping China's public opinion and mediating its state-society interactions. See, among others, Stockmann and Gallagher, "Remote Control"; Stockmann, *Media Commercialization and Authoritarian Rule in China*; J. Lu, "Acquiring Political Information in Contemporary China: Various Media Channels and Their Respective Correlates," *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, no. 83 (2013):828-49; John James Kennedy, "Maintaining Popular Support for the Chinese Communist Party: The Influence of Education and the State-Controlled Media," *Political Studies* 57, no. 3 (2009): 517-36.
13. Yang Su, *Collective Killings in Rural China during the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
14. Keith Bradsher, "Chinese Data Mask Depth of Slowdown, Executives Say," *New York Times* (22 June 2012).
15. Jiangnan Zhu, J. Lu, and T. Shi, "When Grapevine News Meets Mass Media: Different Information Sources and Perceptions of Government Corruption in Mainland China," *Comparative Political Studies* 46, no. 8 (2013): 920-46.
16. <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2009-03-10/060115283341s.shtml>.
17. See, among others, D. P. Green and Alan S. Gerber, "Introduction to Social Pressure and Voting: New Experimental Evidence," *Political Behavior* 32, no. 3 (2010): 331-36; Marc Hetherington and Jonathan D. Weiler, *Authoritarianism and Polarization in American Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
18. T. Shi, "Cultural Values and Political Trust: A Comparison of the People's Republic of China and Taiwan," *Comparative Politics* 33, no. 4 (2001):401-19.

19. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/dfpd/17jlzqh/2011-10/21/content_13949506.htm
20. Bailard uses these two terms to characterize the Internet's effects on political communication. The general idea applies to the role of foreign media in authoritarian societies. Catie Snow Bailard, "Testing the Internet's Effect on Democratic Satisfaction: A Multi-Methodological, Cross-National Approach," *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 9, no. 2 (2012): 185-204.
21. Accessing contradictory information may not necessarily change a person's political attitudes. Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler, "When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions," *Political Behavior* 32, no. 2 (2010): 303-30. Nyhan and Reifler's findings are based on experimental data collected from the United States. The media environment in an authoritarian society is essentially different; and the contradictory information from foreign media may carry significant influence.
22. Yanzhong Huang, "The Politics of HIV/AIDS in China," *Asian Perspective* 30, no. 1 (2006): 95-105; Xiaoling Zhang, "From Totalitarianism to Hegemony: The Reconfiguration of the Party-State and the Transformation of Chinese Communication," *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 68 (2011):103-15.
23. Ya-Wen Lei, "The Political Consequences of the Rise of the Internet: Political Beliefs and Practices of Chinese Netizens," *Political Communication* 28, no. 3 (2011): 291-322.
24. Pippa Norris and R. Inglehart, *Cosmopolitan Communications* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
25. See, among others, Shirk, *Changing Media, Changing China*; Stockmann, *Media Commercialization and Authoritarian Rule in China*.
26. Roya Akhavan-Majid, "Mass Media Reform in China: Toward a New Analytical Framework," *Gazette* 66, no. 6 (2004): 553-65; Richard Baum, "Political Implications of China's Information Revolution: The Media, the Minders, and Their Message," in *China's Changing Political Landscape*, C. Li, ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008).
27. Ashley Esarey, "Cornering the Market: State Strategies for Controlling China's Commercial Media," *Asian Perspective* 29, no. 4 (2005):37-83; Daniel C. Lynch, *After the Propaganda State: Media, Politics, and "Thought Work" in Reformed China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).
28. Stockmann and Gallagher, "Remote Control: How the Media Sustain Authoritarian Rule in China"; Stockmann, *Media Commercialization and Authoritarian Rule in China*; *ibid*.
29. Some scholars rely on the Chinese government's varying effectiveness of control over different media outlets to increase the variation. Lei, "The Political Consequences of the Rise of the Internet"; Stockmann, *Media Commercialization and Authoritarian Rule in China*. Lei distinguishes between netizens, traditional-media users, and nonmedia users in China, while Stockmann differentiates between official, semiofficial, and commercial media in China.
30. Shu-min Huang, *The Spiral Road: Change in a Chinese Village Through the Eyes of a Communist Party Leader* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989).
31. A key variable for our later analysis is people's conceptions of democracy. In his comprehensive examination of contemporary Taiwan's political discourses on democracy, Lorenzo shows that, in Taiwan, there is a commonly shared "understanding of democracy with a recognition of pluralism, multiparty elections, a raft of individual rights and freedom, and procedural justice." David J. Lorenzo, *Conceptions of Chinese Democracy: Reading Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, and Chiang Ching-kuo* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins

- University Press, 2013), 166. This democratic conception clearly contradicts the guardianship discourse by the CCP (we discuss later). Moreover, in Taiwan's mass media, pluralism, partisan politics, individual rights and freedom, and procedural justice are prominently presented in news and political talk shows. See, among others, Wei-chi Lee, "Mediated Politics in Taiwan: Political Talk Shows and Democracy," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (2011): 49-67; Gary Rawnsley and Qian Gong, "Political Communications in Democratic Taiwan: The Relationship Between Politicians and Journalists," *Political Communication* 28, no. 3 (2011): 323-40. Overall, Taiwan's mass media play a critical and positive role in its democratic transition and consolidation. Kuldip R. Rampal, "First Democracy in Chinese History: Media's Role in the Democratization of Taiwan," in I. A. Blankson and P. D. Murphy, eds., *Negotiating Democracy: Media Transformations in Emerging Democracies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007).
32. Due to the penetration of new information technologies, we do not have a perfect natural experiment here, like the ones used by scholars like Kern and Hainmuller, and Enkolipov et al. As discussed later, we adopt appropriate statistical techniques to account for this issue.
 33. Detailed information on the sampling and other technical aspects of the survey is provided in the appendix. Experimental methods are more effective in establishing the causal effects of mass media. Nevertheless, observational data collected through sampling surveys are also of great value for examining media effects in real-life settings. Survey data are of particular value for examining values/norms that could not be easily manipulated in experiments. Since a key goal of this paper is assessing the effects of the CCP's media strategies that target nonpolitical values/norms, we use survey data. To the best of our knowledge, there are limited questions on Chinese citizens' use of foreign media in major national surveys, such as the 2008 ABS survey or the 2007 WVS survey in mainland China. In the 2008 China Survey (a national representative sample), there is one general question on whether respondents read foreign newspapers (D9_3) and another general question on whether respondents browsed foreign websites (D30). Compared to our measures in the two-city survey (as discussed later), such questions are even more difficult to interpret and have much larger measurement errors. Moreover, according to the 2008 China Survey, around 4 percent of the Chinese people accessed foreign media (including Hong Kong and Taiwanese media) via the Internet and newspapers. This percentage is much lower than the one in our survey, which validates the effectiveness of our design in capturing more people accessing foreign media.
 34. We borrow this term from Shi and Lu's work on how the Chinese people understand democracy. Essentially, the guardianship discourse presents democracy as a government led by competent and virtuous politicians with substantial discretionary power who are willing to listen to people's opinions and who are sincere in taking care of people's interests and capable of identifying the best policies for their society. In other words, the guardianship discourse tries to promote paternalistic meritocracy in the name of democracy. For detailed discussions, see T. Shi and J. Lu, "The Shadow of Confucianism," *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 4 (2010):123-30; J. Lu and T. Shi, "The Battle of Ideas and Discourses before Democratic Transition: Different Democratic Conceptions in Authoritarian China," *International Political Science Review* (Forthcoming).
 35. Keping Yu, *Democracy Is a Good Thing: Essays on Politics, Society, and Culture in Contemporary China* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2009).

36. The CCP government has also worked very hard to prevent liberal-democratic ideas from spreading. To deter and suppress possible challenges against its monopoly over the discourse on democracy, the CCP is not short of willingness to use its despotic power. The dismissal of the editor of Ice Point of the *China Youth Daily* clearly demonstrates this.
37. Lu and Shi, "The Battle of Ideas and Discourses before Democratic Transition."
38. A. Nathan, *Chinese Democracy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985); William Theodore de Bary, *Nobility & Civility: Asian Ideals of Leadership and the Common Good* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Lu and Shi, "The Battle of Ideas and Discourses before Democratic Transition."
39. Respondents were asked to (1) tell what they believed the appropriate practice of democracy should be; and (2) focus on the political aspect of democracy. Using "democratic politics" also allows the respondents to define "democracy" in their own way, which is exactly what we try to capture.
40. On the advantage of IRT models in recovering latent constructs with ordinal or dichotomous indicators, see Shawn Treier and Simon Jackman, "Democracy as a Latent Variable," *American Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 1 (2008): 201-17. Results of the three-indicator IRT measurement model are available upon request.
41. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-09/19/content_6759799.htm. The CCP has continued this new morality campaign ever since.
42. Lorenzo, *Conceptions of Chinese Democracy*; Nathan, *Chinese Democracy*.
43. Doh Chull Shin, *Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 88.
44. Constance A. Flanagan et al., "What Does Democracy Mean? Correlates of Adolescents' Views," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 20, no. 2 (2005): 193-218; Lu and Shi, "The Battle of Ideas and Discourses before Democratic Transition."
45. Results of the three-indicator IRT measurement model are available upon request.
46. Respondents were asked: (1) "Which newspapers, including domestic, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and foreign ones, did you read last week for news?" (2) "Which news websites, including domestic, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and foreign ones, did you browse last week for news?" (3) "Which radio stations, including domestic, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and foreign ones, did you listen to last week for news?" and (4) "Which TV channels, including domestic, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and foreign ones, did you watch last week for news?"
47. The list of foreign newspapers, radio programs, websites, and TV programs identified by the respondents is available upon request.
48. This difference is significant at the 0.01 level.
49. These results confirm Xiamen's geographical advantage in receiving foreign radio signals, which was critical in accessing alternative media sources when new information technologies (including satellite TVs and the Internet) were not available. They also confirm that new information technologies help level off the playing field in accessing foreign media in contemporary urban China.
50. Given the small number of respondents who acquired news through various foreign media, it is statistically challenging to further differentiate between various foreign media outlets. For instance, altogether, we have 43 respondents who (in addition to Chinese domestic media) only accessed Taiwanese media for news, and 75 respondents who (in addition to Chinese domestic media) exclusively used foreign websites for news.
51. To what extent Chinese urbanites trust information from foreign media could be another issue. Our measure does not capture this; and this could also bias our estimates toward

- zero. Political wariness might be another concern here, when respondents were asked about their use of foreign media. Like other researchers, we do not detect any significant influence of political wariness in our data. Jie Yan, "Distribution of Non-response in Chinese Political Survey Research," *Wuhan University Journal (Philosophy & Social Sciences)* 61, no. 2 (2008): 225-31; Liying Ren, "Surveying Public Opinion in Transitional China: An Examination of Survey Response" (Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2009). Related results are available upon request.
52. Daniela Stockmann, "One Size Doesn't Fit All: Measuring News Reception East and West," *Chinese Journal of Communication* 2, no. 2 (2009): 140-57.
 53. All summary statistics, as well as percentages of missing values, are provided in the appendix as Table A1.
 54. "Age" is a continuous variable recording respondents' real age. "Education" is measured with the years of formal education. "Gender" is a dichotomous variable with 1 standing for male.
 55. The United States has been widely presented as the symbol of liberal democracy. Thus, respondents were asked if (1) they had been to the United States, and (2) if they had any personal interaction with Americans. Their answers were used to measure their contact with Americans. Respondents were coded as 1 if they gave positive answers to either of the questions.
 56. A good or bad impression of the United States might make its political system more or less appealing. Thus, respondents were asked about their general impression of the United States using a five-point scale, ranging from "Very Good" (5) to "Very Bad" (1).
 57. Official affiliation with the CCP is measured by a binary variable with 0 indicating the lack of such affiliation.
 58. General political interest is measured by respondents' answers to the standard question: "How interested are you in politics and public affairs?" The answer categories are: "4: Very interested," "3: Interested," "2: Not interested," and "1: Not interested at all."
 59. Natalie Jomini Stroud, "Media Use and Political Predispositions: Revisiting the Concept of Selective Media Exposure," *Political Behavior* 30, no. 3 (2008): 341-66.
 60. C. Achen, *The Statistical Analysis of Quasi-Experiments* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986).
 61. This is the approach used by Ken and Hainmueller, and Enikolopov et al. Of course, natural experiments only approximate random assignment.
 62. A. Nichols, "Causal inference with observational data," *Stata Journal* 7(2007): 507-41.
 63. Daniel E. Ho, et al., "Matching as Nonparametric Preprocessing for Reducing Model Dependence in Parametric Causal Inference," *Political Analysis* 15(2007): 199-236. Here, we use the newly developed Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM) technique to match respondents on variables except for their exposure to distinct media environments. Matthew Blackwell et al., "CEM: Coarsened Exact Matching in Stata," *Stata Journal* 9, no. 4 (2009): 524-46.
 64. Efren Perez, "Lost in Translation? Item Validity in Bilingual Political Surveys," *Journal of Politics* 71, no. 4 (2009): 1530-48; Eldad Davidov, "Measurement Equivalence of Nationalism and Constructive Patriotism in the ISSP: 34 Countries in a Comparative Perspective," *Political Analysis* 17(2009): 64-82.
 65. Nested Chi-square tests are used, since models with equivalence constraints are nested within those without such constraints.
 66. For an example of using multigroup SEM to examine moderating effects, see J. Aldrich, Jacob Montgomery, and Wendy Wood, "Turnout as a Habit," *Political Behavior* 33, no. 4 (2011): 535-63.

67. SEM offers two additional benefits for our analysis. First, using path analysis embedded in the SEM, we can include a simultaneous estimation of the effect of collectivism/individualism on Chinese urbanites' democratic conceptions, providing an even more rigorous test of H3. Second, SEM easily incorporates IRT measurement models to recover the continuous latent constructs for people's democratic conceptions and their individualistic orientations.
68. G. King et al., "Analyzing Incomplete Political Science Data: An Alternative Algorithm for Multiple Imputation," *American Political Science Review* 95, no. 1 (2001): 49-69. STATA 11 is used for matching, treatment-effect, and selection-effect modeling. Mplus 6.1 is used for multigroup SEM.
69. Sensitivity tests for the matching analysis show that as the value of Gamma (i.e., the sensitivity parameter) increases from 1 (i.e., free of hidden bias) to 5, the upper boundary for the p -value of the treatment effect of using foreign media is always larger than 0.1. Thus, our estimation of the treatment effect based on the matched data is insensitive even to a bias that would quintuple the odds of using foreign media. Detailed results of the sensitivity tests are available upon request. For related information, see R. Paul Rosenbaum, *Observational Studies*, 2nd ed. (New York: Springer, 2010).
70. Another interpretation of the null finding is that the CCP's propaganda is too effective to be offset by access to foreign media. If this is the case, then our subsequent analysis on the effects of the CCP's media propaganda in promoting collectivism should also generate insignificant results. Nevertheless, as discussed later, we do find significant media effects on collectivism. Of course, given the local nature of our sample, we cannot effectively show the external validity of our findings. Later, we discuss the possible generalizability of our results.
71. The results are provided in the appendix as Table A2.
72. Such unobserved differences may be driven by any socioeconomic, political, and historical distinctions between Xiamen and Chengdu, including their possible differences in local media control.
73. Both CFI and TLI of the restricted specification are larger than the conventionally suggested threshold of 0.9, and the RMSEA is less than the conventionally suggested threshold of 0.08. P. M. Bentler, "Comparative Fit Indexes in Structural Models," *Psychological Bulletin* 107(1990): 238-46; M. W. Browne and R. Cudeck, "Alternative Ways of Assessing Model Fit," in Kenneth A. Bollen and J. S. Long, eds., *Testing Structural Equation Models* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993). The nested Chi-square difference between this model specification and another model specification, wherein all path coefficients are allowed to vary freely between the two groups, gives a Chi-square statistic of 14.615 with 12 degrees of freedom. The associated p -value is 0.263.
74. Contact with Americans is barely significant, but in the predicted direction—exposure to Americans increases individualism. Clearly, in a controlled media environment, socialization with Americans might have provided some different views on the relationship between collective and individual interests. However, due to data limitations, we cannot explore this issue here.
75. Both CFI and TLI measures of the restricted specification are larger than 0.9, and the RMSEA is less than 0.08. The nested Chi-square difference between this model specification and another model specification, wherein all path coefficients are allowed to vary freely between the two groups, gives an insignificant Chi-square statistic of 15.750 with 12 degrees of freedom. The associated p -value is 0.203.

76. Another plausible approach is to run multigroup SEM for Chengdu residents or Xiamen residents embedded in different media environments. However, within each city, we have fewer than 100 respondents who reported using foreign media. This significantly reduces the statistical power of our analysis. Therefore, we use the pooled data.
77. As indicated by the three model-fit indexes at the bottom of Table 4, this restricted multi-group SEM fits the empirical data satisfactorily: both CFI and TLI are larger than 0.9 and the RMSEA is less than 0.08. The nested Chi-square difference between this model specification and another model specification, wherein all path coefficients are allowed to vary freely between the two groups, gives an insignificant Chi-square statistic of 11.008 with 10 degrees of freedom. The associated p -value is 0.357.
78. Detailed results of the pooled SEM model are available upon request.
79. James J. Heckman, "Sample Selection Bias as a Specification Error," *Econometrica* 47, no. 1 (1979): 153-61.
80. We replicate this practice with people's democratic conceptions as the dependent variable. After controlling for selection effects, "individualism" is significantly associated with people's understanding of democracy following the liberal democracy discourse; while "media consumption intensity" does not have any significant direct impact, regardless of the nature of media environments. The results are provided in the appendix as Table A3.
81. Since we are interested in correlations, rather than point estimates, it is methodologically justifiable to use a local sample. M. Manion, "Survey Research in the Study of Contemporary China: Learning from Local Samples," *China Quarterly*, no. 139 (1994): 741-65. We compare our respondents' demographic features (gender, age, and education) to relevant information from China's national statistics in 2005 and the urban subpopulation of the 2007 WVS in mainland China. Our respondents were not different in terms of gender composition and average educational attainment, though they were slightly younger. At least, there is no obvious reason why we should treat the respondents as essentially different from China's general urban population. Of course, this does not fully justify the generalizability of our findings. Detailed information on the comparison is provided in the appendix as Table A4.

Author Biographies

Jie Lu (jlu@american.edu) is assistant professor of government at American University. He studies local governance, the political economy of institutional change, public opinion, and political behavior.

John Aldrich (Aldrich@duke.edu) is Pfizer-Pratt university professor of political science at Duke University. He specializes in American and comparative politics and behavior, formal theory, and methodology.

Tianjian Shi (in memoriam) was associate professor of political science at Duke University. He specialized in comparative politics with an emphasis on political culture and political participation.